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Review of "Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich" by David Clay Large

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David Clay Large. *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Pp. xxv, 361. Cloth \$32.50.

In probing the origins of Nazism, scholars have explored a wide range of possible sources—"deviant" German political traditions, cultural despair, a general crisis of modernity, to name but a few. David Clay Large's insightful new study expands the scope of this inquiry by focusing on the role of a single city—Munich—in giving birth to the Nazi movement.

Where Ghosts Walked is a work of popular history that combines a swift-moving, thorough narrative with an analytically precise agenda. At the center of Large's study lies a paradox: how was it that Munich, a city known to be a tolerant, easy-going center of cultural creativity, gave birth to the repressive movement of National Socialism? For Large, the explanation lies in the Janus-faced realm of bohemia. While the bohemian milieu of *fin-de-siècle* Schwabing helped produce a "much-celebrated culture," it also gave rise to "an internal critique of cosmopolitan modernity and political liberalism that could easily be embraced by the Nazis and their *völkisch* allies." The dark side of this bohemian milieu—which was visible not only in the racist, irrational rantings of the Cosmic Circle group surrounding Stefan George, but also in the nationalistic tendencies of the satirical journal *Simplicissimus*—was best illustrated by its appeal to Adolf Hitler, who arrived in the city in 1913 as a day-dreaming, do-nothing itinerant artist, and later by the district's high electoral support for the NSDAP during the Weimar Republic. The same youthful rebellion against tradition that made bohemian Munich culturally creative also made it politically volatile.

By provocatively identifying Nazism as an outgrowth of Munich's *fin-de-siècle* bohemian milieu, Large challenges the conventional scholarly view that Nazism emerged in reaction to the revolutionary turmoil of the years 1918-19. This aim notwithstanding, *Where Ghosts Walked* is at its most convincing in confirming the merits of this older view. It was mainly in response to the left-wing revolutions of 1918-19—which Large stresses were led by bohemia, such as Kurt Eisner, Gustav Landauer, and Ernst Toller—that a sufficiently reactionary environment emerged in Munich for Nazism to grow and thrive. In the end, bohemia itself fell victim to the ensuing antimodernist climate that pervaded the Weimar Republic and reached its apex in the Third Reich.

The tension in *Where Ghosts Walked* between Large's depiction of bohemia as both culpable for, and victimized by, the forces that produced Nazism highlights a potential problem with the otherwise appealing explanatory concept of bohemia. If figures as disparate as Kurt Eisner and Adolf Hitler were both representatives of bohemia—if, in other words, bohemia could just as easily tend to the political left as the political right—then how decisive a factor was it for the rise of Nazism? Given the importance of the reaction *against* bohemia after 1918-19 for the rise of Nazism, does it not verge on blaming the victim to identify it as the primary source of

subsequent disaster? Large's balanced and eminently readable narrative, to be sure, avoids such pitfalls by acknowledging the importance of the years 1918-19 for the growth of Nazism. "Hitler's real political education," he declares, "began after the suppression of the Bavarian soviet." Still, one is left to wonder whether it was Hitler's bohemian side—which Large emphasizes frequently in his narrative—or his revulsion against bohemia that was decisive for his subsequent political career. Even if this broader question remains unanswered, Large's thought-provoking book deserves considerable credit for directing new attention towards it.

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John Mosher. *Unavoidable Germans: Art vs. Politics, and the Consequences*. New York: University Press of America, 1997. Pp. 381. Cloth \$49.50.

The title of John Mosher's new book plays on German writers' and composers' omnipresence as both path-breaking artists and co-authors of that German identity which Hitler so perversely manipulated. Nazi Germany is no "*Betriebsunfall*" here, and the tubers of Nazism are discernible in Germany's fatal historical disjunction between art and politics. "Art" stands for aesthetics, the apotheosis of culture in a *Kulturstaat*, while "politics" conjures all the negative connotations of base narcissism devoid of soul. Tellingly, this binary opposition emerges in the historical context of the French Revolution, so that "art" becomes a trope for German cultural superiority in the face of French "civilization." Politics becomes anathema, inseparable from the perceived French threat to German idealism. To merely produce a German version of democracy and "politics" would be to face the enemy on its own terms. Germans, writes Mosher, "did not want their ideals to be politicized; rather, they wanted their politics to remain idealized." For a significant portion of German literary luminaries, the German national state figures as an artistic ideal: an unpoliticized state based on "higher values."

This vision of an uncompromising, ruthlessly idealist cultural state makes a certain amount of sense against the background of social transformation at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the time these ideas reach the twentieth century the motivations and, above all, the consequences change dramatically. Mosher follows the theme as it wends its way along the "German relay race" from Goethe through Schiller, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. By the time Thomas Mann shudders while drinking in Wagner's music, the opposition between art and politics has sunk to a validation of German militarism as culture, conceived in self-abnegation as the bulwark against the poison of Western thought. Here Mosher shows Mann and Hitler distastefully reading from the same *völkisch* hymn book: civilization against culture, intellect against nature. The subtleties once clearly